

Return to Water

Framework Update for Pool Operators, Swimming Lessons Providers and Instructor Led Activity (ROI ONLY)

We understand that many of you will be concerned and have a number of questions following the announcement of the new restrictions by the Irish Government on Tuesday 18th August.

We have received further detail on the practical implications of the guidelines on sporting organisations from Sport Ireland and we can confirm that Ireland Active have also contacted leisure facilities to provide guidance and reassurance. In brief, the underlying message is that sport is still to continue and you can continue with your activities ensuring that you are strictly adhering to the public health measures as per the detailed guidance and protocols that we have already issued.

We can confirm that:

- The total Indoor Facility/Pool use can remain at the previous maximum levels of 50, once there is sufficient space available. In addition, facilities should be extra vigilant of potential congestion points such as entrance/exit points, changing rooms and reception areas ensuring that social distancing and other public health measures are maintained at all times.
- Swimming and indoor water-based activities can do so in pods/lanes of 6 once sufficient space is available and strict public health protocols are in place. Facilities should set a maximum lane capacity of 6 swimmers per lane in a 25m and a 50m pool. For pools shorter than 25m in length, facilities should ensure that they have undertaken a robust risk assessment to inform them as to their maximum capacity per lane. These swimmers then become a 'pod' for the duration of their session and are expected to, where possible, always maintain physical distancing.
- Where it is not possible to manage the pool in a lane format, facilities should encourage physical distancing between swimmers.
- Facilities and Lesson Providers should complete a risk assessment, specific to each activity, before reopening to manage the public health risk for their customers, attendees, participants, and staff.
- Risk assessments should consider the risk factors for getting COVID-19 - that of **distance, activity, time and environment**. Pool Operators and Lesson Providers should include controls such as managed entry and exit, participant direction of travel, improved hygiene facilities, and regular cleaning to limit the risk factors.

Swimming Lesson/s Specific

- Swimming Lessons that have been planned can proceed if all is in line with the guiding principles outlined in the previous Framework issued. Lesson Providers must make further considerations in ensuring a maximum of 6 swimmers per lesson for all levels, with strict physical distancing measures in place for all levels, excluding beginners.
- All lessons should be delivered in a 'pod' format where movement between lessons is restricted for a set period of weeks.

- Beginner levels are not expected to physically distance due to the age and skill level of the child. Teachers must always remain physically distanced, teaching from the pool deck.
- Lesson providers should consider setting the timings of lessons to allow for 'pods' to enter the changing rooms, change and exit onto the pool deck whilst maintaining physical distance.
- Where participants, parents and carers are entering and exiting the facility, it is recommended that face coverings are worn. This includes their use in changing and spectating areas. Physical distancing should still be priority. **Please note** that children under 13 years of age should not be expected to wear face coverings.
- Gatherings, including social gatherings, before or after sessions and/or lessons must be avoided. Participants, parents, and carers should practice the relevant physical distancing before and after sessions, lessons and during breaks.
- Where Parents/Guardians are attending in a safeguarding/ supervisory capacity, they are not classified as a spectator. However, strict social distancing and public health guidelines should always be adhered to. In that context, one parent/guardian per child is permitted to attend at a session/lesson, should they/the facility consider it necessary. These provisions will be subject to strict protocols which will be issued in the coming days.

Instructor Led Aquatic Activity (Aqua Aerobics)

Instructor Led Aquatic Activity (Aqua Aerobics) can continue to take place. However, providers should consider the following:

- Organised training/ classes can continue to be delivered. However, these should now be delivered in multiple pods of 6 people once sufficient space is available and strict public health protocols are in place. Space should be defined based on the recommendation of a 6 square metres per person bather load and the relevant physical distancing requirement.
- Class Pods should remain at 6 people only as per the guidance. However, classes may operate multiple pods if sufficient space is available and strict public health protocols are in place. Each person should, where possible, remain in the same pod each week.

Facilities and Lesson Providers have shown great resilience and adaptability over the last 6 months, having undertaken a huge amount of work to ensure the health and safety of customers and workforce upon the reopening of facilities. We are aware that the latest Government restrictions may pose new challenges for businesses and we do therefore ask that Facilities and Lesson Providers are extremely vigilant during this time to give each business and the industry the best opportunity moving forwards during this pandemic.

To support Facilities and Lesson Providers, Swim Ireland will continue to host weekly virtual Coffee Chats as well as a number of free Return to Water webinars throughout September and October.

To view our full schedule or to book - <https://www.swimireland.ie/files/documents/Online-Training-Schedule.pdf>